



Coast Guard Flag Voice 48

RESTORING THE CIVILIAN WORKFORCE, PART 1

It should not be a surprise to anyone our civilian personnel management system is not meeting all our civilian employees' and managers' needs. Most notably, after making good progress at filling the civilian workforce over the last year, recently progress slowed and even reversed itself. This and the next Flag Voice will describe how we got to where we are and recent short- and long-term actions to correct the situation. Because it's important to provide the most complete picture, I'll discuss this situation in two Flag Voices. Background: FY 94 Plan In 1994, with a call for all programs to implement budget efficiencies, the Office of Personnel and Training (G-P) proposed to consolidate civilian personnel management into a more efficient organization. The approved consolidation reduced the Headquarters staff by more than 40% and combined five Civilian Personnel Offices into a single service center (the "hub and spoke" concept) under the Coast Guard Personnel Command, reducing the combined staffing by almost 30%. These reductions were designed to meet National Performance Review (NPR) targets of a 50% reduction in civilian personnel specialists by the end of FY99 and a \$1.6 million cost savings while maintaining services. Key assumptions had to be met for this effort to be successful, in particular:

- (1) Assumption: The consolidation should not be implemented simultaneously with streamlining. Reality: Streamlining efforts accelerated; both were done together.
- (2) Assumption: A new, DoT-wide, civilian human resources management information system would be in place to augment performance for a reduced staff. Reality: Even today, this is well off in the future.
- (3) Assumption: Civilian personnel workload would be stable. Reality: All workload indicators have continued to increase.
- (4) Assumption: The serviced population would be below 6,260, our 1994 authorized strength. Reality: We are moving toward our pre-streamlining workforce numbers.
- (5) Assumption: The new organization would be staffed with 96 FTP. Reality: Only 85 were approved.

Current Situation

On implementation, civilian personnel was the only function that met the NPR reduction goals and earlier than expected, with a \$1.6 million savings.

However, service was not maintained, evidenced by our workload statistics and customer reports. Our own assessment last fall indicated it was not likely we will be able to supply a workforce at the fully funded level by 2000, the stated goal for all workforces (active duty, reserve and civilian).

Customers have expressed concern about the length of time it takes to fill a vacancy and the impact this

has on their organization. Some critical personnel actions were not completed on time, affecting employees' paychecks. The Balanced Scorecard Survey, a DoT initiative, indicated a number of critical areas needed improvement.

In response to these deficiencies, over the last couple of years we took these actions:

(1) Modestly increased positions in the operating personnel office's staff,

mostly temporary;

(2) As time and resources permitted, began information technology initiatives, such as a web site especially for training and CG job opportunities, an automated classification system, an automated employment verification system, and Employee Express, which enables employees to change portions of their payroll records on-line;

(3) Conducted an extensive quality process review; and

(4) Contracted for recruiting services with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for almost two years.

However, these improvements did not begin to compensate for the reduced staff. Furthermore, turnover among the operating personnel office staff, especially in the "hub," became an obstacle. CGPC-cpm's projected FY 99 turnover rate was 30% vs. the CG average of about 6%. From exit interviews we found most of the reasons for separation involved promotions, unmanageable workload, lack of technology tools, and workplace climate factors.

As mentioned above, the workload has increased substantially -- increases well beyond any assumptions built into the FY94 plan, which counted on technology to save work. For instance, one of the most basic measures is personnel actions -- the number of hires, separations, pay changes, and organization changes we process involving our civilian employees. In FY 94, our base year before streamlining, we processed 17,000 personnel actions overall. In FY98, we processed 20,000 -- an 18 percent increase. With both the resulting staff reductions and current fill rate, the individual employees' workload increases are much higher. For a fully staffed hub, the workload has increased by 46 percent from FY94. Worse, however, our current staff level indicates a workload increase of 85%. In addition to the number of personnel actions processed per employee, many other workload indicators are increasing.

The next [Flag Voice](#) will describe the plan we are implementing to help alleviate this situation.

Regards, FL Ames

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